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ABSTRACT

The essay provides background material for a junior high school unit, The Emergence of the New American. The unit deals with the colonial period in America in terms of the evolution of the political American. Separate sections of the paper discuss the format of the course, the Englishman in the 17th century, the lure of the new world, changes over the generations in the new world, slavery, the influence of geographical differences in North and South in shaping people's lives, the old colonial system, and royal government in America. The final section of the paper traces the conditions which gave rise to American political attitudes. The author notes that even though early settlers patterned their governments after English Parliament, a very different kind of government and attitude toward government existed. Since government in the colonies was everybody's business, it lost the sanctity and awe with which it had been surrounded in England. A table of contents of the four-part unit is included. Some titles in Part I include: What Motivated Englishmen to Plant Colonies in America?; On New England; and On Virginia. Part II presents Bodo, the Life of a Medieval Peasant, and two articles on Virginia. Part III is the game, Empire (see SO 012 054), and Part IV covers the New American, sections of Samuel Sewall's diary, readings about an indentured servant, a slave, George Washington, and the conflict between the colonial assemblies and the royal governors. (KC)

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Occasional Paper No. 6

The Emergence of the American

BY

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Introduction

"The Emergence of the American" is not only the title of this essay, but also the name of an entire unit developed by the Social Studies Curriculum Program. The unit, meant for the junior high school years, deals with the colonial period in America; Professor Morgan was the senior consultant for this unit. He wrote this essay as an introduction to the unit and as a guide to teachers who would be using the material. In order to clarify an occasional reference to portions of the unit, we have included here a table of contents of the unit, which gives an idea of the various topics covered. For the most part, however, Professor Morgan's essay is highly readable quite apart from the context for which it was originally intended, as it attempts to discover whether in fact there came to be, on the American continent, "a new man."

Edmund S. Morgan is Sterling Professor of History at Yale University. He has written extensively on the American colonial period. Among his publications are: The Puritan Family *(1944),* Virginians at Home *(1952),* The Stamp Act Crisis *(with Helen M. Morgan, 1953),* The Birth of the Republic *(1956),* The Puritan Dilemma *(1958),* The Gentle Puritan *(1962), and* Visible Saints *(1963).*

PETER WOLFF
Editorial Director

December, 1965

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The Emergence of the American

The Emergence of the American is an attempt to introduce junior high school students to American history. It deals with the settlement of the English colonies that later became the United States. But it does not attempt to impart all the facts that are usually presented in a course on American colonial history. Instead, it tries to bring students face to face with the men who made the change from Englishman to American and with their New World children. People who crossed the ocean suffered a sea change, and their children and grandchildren and great-grandchildren continued to change and grow until there emerged a man whom everyone recognized as new and different from his European ancestors. What, then, was different about him?

The object throughout has been, not to tell, but to ask. How did the American come to be? Why did Englishmen come to America? How did they keep alive when they got there? How did they get along together? What happened to the ideas and attitudes they brought with them? What did they think about their countrymen left behind in England? About their king, about the governors he sent to rule them, the laws his Parliament made for them? And after a century and a half in the New World what *was* the American, this new man?

The questions are asked, and the student is given the materials to answer them—the same kind of materials from which historians have constructed and are still constructing answers. Every student must become his own historian, grappling with the problems of the past, and achieving, we hope, a vicarious experience of life when the New World was still new.

Obviously not every student will receive the same experience, any more than any two men did in the seventeenth century, or than any two people react exactly the same way in a given situation today. But the experiences presented to the student have been selected with a purpose, and while everyone should be encouraged to interpret them in his own way, it is only fair to point out what the purpose was and to suggest some of the ideas that the authors and editors themselves find in the materials.

The guiding purpose was political: to discover the American as a political animal, and to see him emerge from the Englishman. But we have thought of politics in the broadest sense, as the product of all the attitudes, ideas, and experiences, social, economic, and religious, that affect the way men live together. We have wished to see men first and their politics second, to present students with people rather than statistical abstractions. Many, indeed most,

of the materials will accordingly appear to have only a remote connection with politics. In some cases the student may never perceive the connection, but the purpose will be served if he ultimately arrives at a sense, however inarticulate, of the way an eighteenth-century American might react toward political authority.

The Englishman

To trace the sources of that reaction, we must begin in England at the opening of the seventeenth century. A separate unit, comparable to *The Emergence of the American*, is already in preparation, devoted entirely to England on the eve of American colonization; but even without the help of this detailed study, we can examine some of the ideas and attitudes, the intellectual baggage, that the first settlers carried with them.

Although the sixteenth century had been a time of rapid social change, with fortunes made and lost, noblemen humbled and commoners ennobled, Englishmen retained a strong conviction that every man had his place and ought to know it. If yeomen were skipping into velvet breeches and sending their sons to college, it was not right that they should; and it was certainly wrong that great men, raised to expect the deference of all save the king, should find themselves reduced to humble circumstances or be obliged to sell a part of their lands in order to maintain the manner of living appropriate to their rank. The right kind of society was one in which every man stayed within the estate and calling where God had placed him. The plowman had his task and so did the weaver and the cobbler. So too did the lord of a manor. Each had his rights and duties. And society was held together by men exercising the rights of their place and fulfilling its duties.

What determined a man's place? How did he know where he stood in relation to others? More than anything else, it was a question of how he made his living and how much living he made. Then, as now, the less muscle he had to use at his job, the more he made and the higher he stood. The servant, bond or free, who bent a strong back to a master's will was the least well rewarded and occupied the lowest rung on the social ladder, while the man who wielded only a pen stood high and the man who merely collected a toll on the work of others stood higher still.

There were many ways to make a living in England. Every town had its artisans, and the making of textiles was already a large-scale enterprise. But the great majority of people still lived from the land, and a man's place most often depended on the amount of land he owned and on the way he owned it. Every piece of land had a long history behind it and usually more than one person enjoyed rights of some kind in it. The local squire or lord might be

entitled to a rent from it or to certain services to be performed on his other lands. A tenant might rent it or lease it or even in a sense own it. Though the tenant paid annual rents or services, the lord did not necessarily have the right to evict him or even to change the rents. And if the land lay in an "open field," as in Weyhill, neither the lord nor the tenant was free to use it as he pleased, for the whole community shared in deciding when and how it should be plowed and sown and harvested.

Any of the rights to a piece of land could be bought or sold or passed on from father to son, and during the sixteenth century a good deal of buying and selling of land had gone on. A steady rise in prices had enabled yeomen farmers with fixed rents to earn more from their produce, and they often invested the earnings in buying more land. Similarly merchants who made fortunes in foreign trade often invested in land and aspired to become country squires or noblemen. For no matter how wealthy a man might become in trade, his place in society would not be as high as that of the man who lived from the rents of his tenants.

At the top of the social pyramid was the king, who owned large tracts of land scattered all over England. And in the eyes of Englishmen it was fitting that the largest landlord should also be the head of the government. The first business of government then as always was the protection of property, and the man who had the most property to protect was the appropriate man to take command.

It did not follow that the king's authority derived from his property. The people of England were his subjects, and they owed him obedience because he was their king, appointed by God to rule them. Government was one of the attributes of kingship, to be handed down like a precious heirloom from father to son, while the attribute of a good subject was obedience. There might be things that a king ought not to command his subjects to do, but it was not the proper business of his subjects to correct him if he erred. He could demand obedience, as a lord might demand services from his tenants.

In practice, however, it had become possible for subjects to exercise a certain restraint on the commands of their king. And that restraint rested on the lands that subjects owned. Although the king was rich in lands and treasure, and though it would have been improper for him to be less rich than any of his subjects, he was not rich enough to bear all the expenses that he incurred by his power to govern. He was not rich enough to pay by himself for his armies, his navies, and his host of administrative officers. In order to meet expenses he had to collect taxes from other property owners, and this he did through Parliament. The kings of England had early discovered that it was easier to get subjects not only to contribute to the costs of government but also to obey its edicts, if their consent were secured in advance. In Parliament men of the greatest dignity (and largest lands) gave their consent (or refusal)

in person in the House of Lords; other property owners chose representatives to act for them in the House of Commons.

Technically the authority of Parliament derived from the king and its decisions were made in the name of the king, but in fact it was the property of the members and their constituents that gave Parliament its power. By the seventeenth century it was understood that only Parliament could levy taxes on the property of Englishmen, and when the king needed money, he had to get the consent of the members and especially of the House of Commons; for the Commons represented a much larger amount of land, and thus a much larger source of revenue, than was owned by the individuals in the House of Lords.

Through its control of taxation, the House of Commons in the sixteenth century reached out to exercise more and more control over the actions of government. The king or queen continued to be the acknowledged head of the state, from whom all authority flowed. But the House of Commons was slowly insinuating its influence into the making of governmental policy. It held the strings of the nation's purse, and if the monarch disregarded its wishes, he might find the purse snapped shut. At the time when American colonization began, the king still made policy, with one eye to its acceptability in the Commons, but the beginnings of a new system of government were already visible, a system in which the subject would one day be transformed to a citizen and the king to a figurehead. Although such a development was still a long way off, Parliament in the sixteenth and early seventeenth century already concerned itself with much more than taxation. When the king wanted money he had to make his bargains with the members of Parliament and to accept legislation of their proposing about matters that he might consider none of their business.

In particular Parliament concerned itself with religion. From the 1530's when Henry VIII withdrew the country from control of Rome, Englishmen had been arguing about the kind of church and the kind of religion they should have. Henry had made himself the head of the English church, and his successors on the throne continued to claim exclusive authority over ecclesiastical affairs. But with the translation of the Bible into English, no authority could control the ferment that its words produced in the minds of men. Englishmen, reading the word of God for themselves, were not ready to stop with the limited reforms in the church that their kings or queens allowed.

In Parliament the voices of Puritans—those who cried for more and more reform—became ever more strident. It required all the political skill of Queen Elizabeth I, the greatest politician of her time, to restrain the Puritans in Parliament and steer a middle way. Her seventeenth-century successors, James I and Charles I, with less skill and perhaps less Protestantism, found themselves increasingly at odds with Parliament, until Charles I announced his intention in 1628 to do without it. For a dozen years he did, but when the

royal coffers were emptied and his efforts to raise money without Parliament failed, he finally had to call it again. He found it more refractory and more powerful than ever. Its members shortly took full control of the government. In 1649 they beheaded the king, had their way with the church, and ran the country under Oliver Cromwell, until Cromwell died, zeal burned out, and England returned to a monarchy in government and a middle way in the church.

The Lure of a New World

In the meantime, while James I and Charles I reigned, Englishmen took possession of Virginia, Maryland, and New England in the name of the king. North America had lain there for a century without attracting much attention in England. In Elizabeth's reign a few enterprising explorers had tried unsuccessfully to find ways through it to the known riches of the Orient. And there had been an abortive attempt to establish a settlement at Roanoke Island, off the coast of present-day North Carolina. But for the most part sixteenth-century Englishmen showed little interest in occupying the New World. The world of England occupied their attention or, if they sought riches elsewhere, it was likely to be in raiding the Spanish ships that carried gold and silver, all smelted and refined, across the ocean from the New World. That her subjects preyed on the Spaniards caused no dismay to a queen whom the Spaniards had tried in 1588 to unseat. And what better occupation for Protestants than converting Catholic gold into Protestant pounds and shillings!

After the accession of James I in 1603, Englishmen were faced with a monarch who made peace with Spain and promised to harry all Puritans out of the land. If the gold and silver of the New World were to reach English pockets now, the treasure would have to be tapped at its source. And since the Spaniards had found gold in the southern continent, why should it not be equally in the north? Suddenly all the talk was of Virginia, and the wealth that lay waiting there for him who would but pick it up: "I tell thee, gold is more plentiful there than copper is with us." Marston was writing satire, but he was prompted by the fortune hunters who thought to get rich quick in a Virginian El Dorado.

To those who did not share in the expectations of easy wealth, America had other attractions. As the demand for land rose in England, the empty continent across the water invited yeoman farmers and hard-pressed country squires alike. Even noblemen and would-be noblemen dreamt of princely domains where land could be measured by the square mile. And for those who stood on either side of England's middle way in religion the New World offered a retreat where churches could be what they ought to be. In Maryland a Catholic nobleman established a refuge from the laws that punished English Catholics for refusal to attend the Anglican Church or to take the oaths affirming the

ecclesiastical supremacy of the king. In Maryland a Catholic could be a Catholic, not a recusant. In New England, on the other hand, the Puritans could found a New Canaan and no longer strive in vain to purify the English church.

America, in brief, seemed to offer a short cut to goals that Englishmen had long sought at home. In leaving England they had no thought of casting off their subjection to royal authority and it never occurred to them that they might cease to be Englishmen. They probably would not have left if they had thought that such a thing might happen. Indeed, the Pilgrims, extreme Puritans who had moved to Holland, left that country for the New World because they feared that their children would grow up as Dutchmen. They wanted to be Englishmen in a New England. Throughout the colonial period they and other colonists continued to call the mother country "home," even when they had been born in America and had never seen the shores of England.

A Happy Mediocrity

Over the generations the New World worked its changes on these men, silently and sometimes imperceptibly but nonetheless surely. The change began before anyone could have recognized it, in the very process by which men were attracted to the new land. England was a complex society, with a highly developed division of labor and a social hierarchy that reached dizzying heights in the monarchy. The pyramid could not be transported intact to America. The king, for example, would not go there, nor would any prince of the blood. And neither did any nobleman. Though one noble family succeeded in establishing a colony, Maryland, the family itself stayed in England.

America, in fact, turned out to have few attractions for noblemen. It was not difficult for a lord to map out vast estates there and get the king to assign them to him and his heirs forever. But those who did so quickly discovered the essential difference between the easy-to-get lands of America and the hard-to-get lands of England. The English lands had people on them, men who plowed the ground or tended sheep and paid rents and services. American lands had trees on them, a few wild animals, and perhaps a few Indians (about a million in the whole of North America and most of them far from the Atlantic coast) who showed no inclination to pay rent. In order to profit from his American domain a lord must fill it with people who would pay rent. It was not cheap to get them there. And after they arrived, it was no easy matter to collect rents from them. In the New World there was enough land that lay unclaimed and unsurveyed so that a man, once there, had no need to stay on his would-be lord's would-be estate.

Englishmen who came to America with an expectation of gathering gold

freely from the rocks and hills were equally disappointed. The part of America occupied by the English offered no easy way to wealth. There was no gold, and the earliest settlers of Virginia starved while they looked for it. To noblemen and to get-rich-quick adventurers, America offered only hardship and degradation.

The men who came and came to stay, then, were apt to be from the middling or lower parts of English society. A poor man could not afford to come on his own—passage alone cost six pounds and supplies to tide him over the first months would be as much again. The total was more than a man from the lowest ranks could muster. But a yeoman or a skilled artisan could manage it, and a gentleman of small fortune, a country squire not ashamed to use his hands, could afford to bring along a few servants to help him out and might even bargain to keep them for several years in return for paying their passage to the land of opportunity.

A land of opportunity it proved to be—for men who knew how to work. A strong back was a much more valuable commodity in America than in England, and high birth was much less valuable. In England the largest properties frequently came to a man by virtue of his birth, by inheritance. In America the possession of title to large acres meant little, but work created valuable property rapidly, when applied to the wild but fertile land. Cut down the trees, plow the soil, harvest your crop, and you were suddenly a freeholder, on your own, with no landlord, no rents, no services. Perhaps you owed the king a quitrent—a mere two shillings for every hundred acres—but the king was three thousand miles away, and his collectors were not efficient.

America thus exerted a leveling effect. It attracted settlers from a limited range of the English social spectrum, and then it rapidly created property for those who began with little more than their own labor. A man who could initially command the labor of others might also expand his property, but generally the gap between him and the man who worked for himself was narrowed.

Slave and Free

Unfortunately the same forces that dignified the labor of common men ultimately tempted Americans to adopt a system of forced labor that degraded the laborer far below the status of any Englishman. In the New World where nature rewarded labor so richly, it was tempting to think of owning men, men who would labor exclusively for you, like beasts of burden, and even pass on their children to you to do the same. Slavery was not a new thing in the world, but it did not exist in England. Americans invented it anew in order to profit from the extraordinary rewards that labor could bring from fertile soils.

This was the paradox of American society, which grew up half slave and half free. Free Americans enjoyed a happy mediocrity, with the gaps between social classes so short that foreign observers found it difficult to detect them at all. Nearly everyone worked; nearly everyone owned property; and no one enjoyed the kind of deference that everyone accorded the aristocracy in Europe. But between free man and slave stood a gap wider than any that divided man from man in England. And that gap was rendered the more obvious and the more odious by color. Free men were white; slaves were black, imported from Africa against their will.

Negro slavery existed in all of England's American colonies, but it became more common as one traveled south from Pennsylvania. In Virginia at the end of the colonial period there were 250,000 slaves in a population of 550,000; and South Carolina had 100,000 slaves in a population of 170,000. Massachusetts, on the other hand, had fewer than 10,000 slaves in a population of 340,000.

In all the colonies it was the free who made decisions and determined the character of the institutions that grew up and gained the name American. And it is hard to assess the effects of slavery on the free. Free Americans acquired different characteristics in the South than they did in the North; and the differences doubtless derived in some measure from the prevalence of slavery, though there were other forces that helped to differentiate Americans in, say, Virginia, from those in Massachusetts. Thomas Jefferson, in a letter to a French friend, once explained the differences in a graphic, perhaps exaggerated way.

In the North they are	In the South they are
cool	fiery
sober	voluptuary
laborious	indolent
persevering	unsteady
independent	independent
jealous of their own liberties and just to those of others	zealous for their own liberties, but trampling on those of others
interested	generous
chicaning	candid
superstitious and hyprocritical in their religion	without attachment or pretensions to any religion but that of the heart

Jefferson went on to say that "These characteristics grow weaker and weaker by gradation from North to South and South to North, insomuch that an ob-

servant traveller, without the aid of the quadrant, may always know his latitude by the character of the people among whom he finds himself."*

It is only fair to add that Jefferson himself furnished a poor illustration of his own picture of the Southerner. A less indolent man never lived. And a study of the correspondence of other Southern planters suggests that running a plantation was generally a full-time job which left little leisure for its owner. Nevertheless, differences existed. As the American environment shaped the American into a different man from the Englishman, so the Southern environment and the Northern shaped two varieties of free American. If in our examination of the species we are to understand the variety Southerner as well as the variety Northerner, and the political attitudes of each, we must begin with geography, for geography will help to explain not only why there were more slaves in the South but also why free men there acquired characteristics somewhat different from those that characterized the North.

Geography and People

Eastern North America is distinguished by two geographical features: a chain of mountains running northeast to southwest and a coastal plain that parallels these mountains to the east. In some prehistoric geologic epoch the northeastern part of the continent sank below the level of the southern part. The result was to leave in the south a broad coastal plain, easily cultivated and intersected by large navigable rivers. The corresponding coastal plain in the north lies beneath the waters of the Atlantic. There it forms the large "banks" of relatively shallow water that codfish find congenial. The northern coast is rocky and irregular, full of indentations that make good harbors, as the Atlantic washes against the foothills of the mountains. The interior is hilly, difficult to cultivate, and penetrated by few navigable rivers.

Given these topographical differences, it was perhaps inevitable that the people who settled in New England should devote themselves more than those in the South to fishing and to the sea, and that agriculture in the South should be easier and more profitable than in the North, and that the patterns of settlement on the land should take differing shapes.

The differences were probably accentuated by other factors than geography —by religion, for example. The people who settled New England were much more addicted to Puritanism than those who went South. Puritans did settle everywhere. The fact that more came to New England than elsewhere, and that Puritanism left less of a mark in the South, may mean that New England was in some way more suited to it. Just as slavery existed throughout the

*The Papers of Thomas Jefferson, ed. by Julian P. Boyd *et al.* (Princeton: 1953), Vol. VIII, p. 468.

colonies but more prevalently in the South, so Puritanism was everywhere, but more prevalent in the North. The Puritans themselves seem to have felt an affinity for New England's rocky soil. John White, admitting that the land in New England was less rich than that in Virginia, urged Puritans to settle in New England for that very reason, to avoid the temptations to luxury that went with a fertile soil. And when Oliver Cromwell invited New Englanders to move to the West Indies, they declined. Perhaps they felt that Puritanism would not keep well in hot weather. The ways in which geography works on men are subtle.

In any case, Puritanism combined with geography in New England to produce the New England town, a unique institution. Here men lived close to one another and close to their church, or rather to their meetinghouse, for in Puritan New England the word "church" never applied to a building but only to a company of worshippers. And although membership in the church was restricted to "visible saints," a chosen few, everyone in a community was expected to attend church and therefore to live nearby. New Englanders accordingly settled in small tightly knit towns, rubbed elbows every day, and met at the meetinghouse, not only for worship, but in town meetings, where they ordered their affairs and elected town officers to manage them. Together they assigned the town's lands. In doing so they tried at first to recognize the social distinctions they had brought with them from England, assessing a man's dignity and estate and assigning him an amount of land suitable to his status. But by comparison with England, no man stood very high or very low, and work, the great American equalizer, quickly upset preconceived assignments both of dignity and property.

Old ideas and attitudes died hard. People still repeated the aphorisms that John Winthrop had uttered aboard the *Arbella*: "God Almightie in his most holy and wise providence hath soe disposed of the Condicion of mankinde, as in all times some must be rich some poore, some highe and eminent in power and dignitie, others meane and in subjeccion." But in the space of a few years, for example, between the settlement of Sudbury and the settlement of Marlborough, the influence of free land and hard work began to show. Lands at Marlborough were assigned on a much more equal basis than in Sudbury. This did not mean that the younger generation had repudiated the social philosophy brought from England, but they certainly restricted its application to a narrower range of human activities and institutions.

The soil of New England did not in any case encourage large accumulations of land by an individual, at least not in the early years. The soil was rough, lean, hard to work. No important commercial crop for export was found to grow upon it successfully, and the lack of navigable rivers made it expensive to transport any crop from the place where it was grown to a port whence it might be shipped. New Englanders therefore tended to become subsistence

farmers, growing their own food, weaving their own cloth, and exporting only a small surplus each year. Their farms tended to be small farms, worked by a man and his family.

But if the amount of surplus produced for export by individual New England farmers was small, much too small for them to engage in the business of exporting it themselves, the total was substantial. In the harbor towns of New England a few men very early turned to the sea. The first merchants were mainly ship captains, who bought the crops of many farmers and carried them to market in the West Indies, where sugar planting was so profitable that the planters put their whole labor force to it and imported their food. Gradually New Englanders began transporting to markets in Europe the crops of other regions than their own, tobacco from Virginia and Maryland, sugar from the West Indies, and thus reaped middlemen's profits all over the world. The New England merchant rivaled the London merchant.

In Virginia quite a different set of conditions was at work. Whatever force religion may have exerted to keep settlements small and compact was weaker in Virginia than in New England, and the influence of geography operated heavily against it. Virginia had few harbors of the kind that dotted the New England coast, but the York, the James, and the Potomac Rivers, stretching inland for a hundred miles before the first waterfall, made the whole of Virginia a harbor, with room for wharves along hundreds of miles of safe anchorage, on both sides of each river.

Virginia's tidewater lands were flat and fertile, easy to cultivate once the trees were down, with direct access to market along the rivers for any commercial crop that the land might grow. Five years after the first permanent settlement began at Jamestown, Virginians discovered a commercial crop, tobacco. Tobacco was native to the New World. First brought to Europe by the Spaniards, it quickly acquired a vogue there, initially as a medicine and then as a diversion! The settlers at Jamestown found the Indians of the region growing a coarse variety, and in 1612 John Rolfe, who later distinguished himself by marrying Pocahontas, introduced seeds of the superior Spanish variety from the West Indies. Soon everyone in Virginia was growing it.

In the first years the crop brought bonanza prices in England, but as production increased far more rapidly than consumption, prices fell. By the middle of the century, the amount of tobacco a man could grow by his own labor was still enough to make it worth his while to devote most of his time to growing it, but the price he got was scarcely enough to make him rich. No great shrewdness was required to see that a way to larger wealth in Virginia would be to combine free land with unfree labor. Land was still abundant along the rivers. It could be obtained in huge quantities under the headright system by everyone who could afford to bring over men to work it. The problem was labor. If a man could get others to work for him, he might still grow rich. For a time

the demand was supplied by English servants, who agreed to work for a term of years in return for their passage. After the term was up they could start on the road to riches for themselves.

But as production increased and the margin of profits decreased, men looked for a source of labor that would not be so transitory, and in the latter half of the seventeenth century, Virginians began to introduce permanent chattel slavery of imported Africans. The end result was a society stretched out in large plantations along the rivers, in which slaves grew tobacco, to be picked up by ocean-going ships from the planter's own wharf. Scattered among the plantations, often on land not directly adjoining a river, men who relied on their own labor, perhaps with one or two slaves, continued to work their own farms, growing tobacco which they sold to the nearest large planter.

The Virginia planter liked to think of himself as a transplanted English squire, and he certainly came closer to it than most Americans. But the differences were still great. The English squire lived from the labors of men who paid him rents and services but who also enjoyed rights and privileges beyond his power to control. The Virginia planter's neighbors owed him nothing but the deference that traditional social ideas might lead them to offer to success and size. His slaves, on the other hand, paid him all their labor and had virtually no rights or privileges of their own. Within his plantation he was an absolute monarch, with powers greater than any man in England could claim. Outside it he was simply another planter, with no title to distinguish him from his poorer neighbors.

Neither the southern planter nor the New England farmer, then, bore a close resemblance to their counterparts in England. At first sight it might also seem that they also bore no very close resemblance to each other. But on closer inspection one may discern two fundamental attributes that they had in common: first, they both owned land for which they performed no services and paid no rent or only a nominal one, land on which, if worst came to worst, a man by his own labor could at least keep himself alive. Second, they were both subjects of a king who lived three thousand miles away, across an ocean that no king crossed. These two facts, more than any others, help to explain the political ideas and attitudes that gradually came to distinguish the American. But before examining his ideas and attitudes, we must recur once more to England and the relation between king and Parliament that developed after American colonization got under way.

The Old Colonial System

When the monarchy was restored in 1660, Parliament retained a dominant position in the government. Although the king resumed a large share of his

old powers, he could never again ignore the wishes of Parliament, never again succeed in running the government without it, as Charles I had done from 1628 to 1640. When James II ascended the throne and attempted to rule as though Parliament were not there, the members quickly replaced him with William of Orange in the Revolution of 1688.

Even after 1688 the king was by no means a figurehead. Throughout most of the eighteenth century he had real functions and real powers, but Parliament was clearly the most powerful branch of government; and the king, in choosing his executive and administrative officers, picked them from members of Parliament and might even be obliged to pick men from Parliamentary groups that could command a substantial number of votes in the Commons. The British cabinet system of government was not developed until the end of the century, but the outlines of it were taking shape.

Now one of the powers that the king resumed at the Restoration in 1660 and retained throughout the American colonial period was the power of authorizing the founding of colonies. The earlier colonies had all been started under royal charters, and after the Restoration the king authorized a new series of colonies, embracing New York, New Jersey, Pennsylvania, and the Carolinas. But during the interregnum Parliament had begun to regulate the trade of the colonies, so as to benefit the merchants of England. Immediately after the Restoration, in 1660 and 1663, Parliament returned to this operation and passed the famous Navigation Acts. In subsequent years, though it left the founding and government of the colonies entirely to the king, it kept the Navigation Acts on the books, occasionally revising or adding to them; and it expected the king to enforce the acts through the royal customs service and the royal navy.

These acts, the terms of which are embodied in the rules of "The Game of Empire," were designed to achieve three objects. The first was to strengthen the merchant marine of England and her colonies by confining all trade with the colonies to English or colonial ships. With foreign shipping forbidden to enter colonial ports, the New Englanders, already heavily engaged in trade in their own ships, stepped up their commerce and also entered largely into the building of ships.

The second object was to give England a steady source of supply for products that could not be produced there and for which she would otherwise be dependent on foreign countries. To achieve this end, the colonists were forbidden to carry certain "enumerated commodities" anywhere except England or another English colony. The first articles enumerated, by the act of 1660, were tobacco, cotton, sugar, indigo, ginger, and woods used in dyeing cloth. Rice and molasses were added to the list in 1704, naval stores in 1705, copper and furs in 1721.

The third and final object of the acts was to give English merchants a mono-

poly of supplying the colonies with English and European manufactures. By the act of 1663 no European goods could be imported into the colonies unless they were shipped from England. An exception was made in the case of salt, which could be shipped directly from Europe to New England, for use in the fisheries there. It was also provided that wine from the Azores (considered a part of Europe) could be shipped directly to any of the colonies, an allowance that permitted the New Englanders to develop a trade in exporting barrel staves to the Azores and bringing back full barrels of Madeira wine.

The terms of the Navigation Acts were not oppressive to the colonies on the North American mainland. Initially their only product affected was tobacco. The colonists could still ship nonenumerated commodities anywhere they could find a market. Though they had to buy their manufactured goods from England, England was one of the most advanced industrial countries in the world and could supply textiles and hardware as cheaply as they could be had anywhere.

Nevertheless, though the acts as a whole did not seriously threaten the economic interests and activities of the colonies, it was profitable for individuals to violate them. When the king accepted the task of enforcing them, he had to deal, at three thousand miles distance, with the new political animal that was beginning to emerge in America.

Royal Government in America

The problem was rendered more difficult than it might have been by the process through which England had founded her colonies, or rather had allowed them to be founded. The settlements took place during a time when king and Parliament were engaged in a contest for power at home. And while Parliament did not challenge the king's authority to authorize colonies, he did not even consider asking for funds with which to start colonies himself. If he had asked he would certainly not have got the amount needed. And if the members of Parliament had given him anything, they would doubtless have withheld funds needed for some other purpose at home. Consequently, the king had to leave the job of colonizing to private enterprise; and to make the enterprise attractive, he signed away, in royal charters, virtually all his rights of government. England's colonies, whether founded before the Restoration or after, all began without royally appointed officers of government on the scene. The right to govern rested either in a proprietor like Lord Baltimore or William Penn (or in a group of proprietors) or in a private corporation like the Virginia Company or the Massachusetts Bay Company.

When the king undertook to enforce the Navigation Acts and thus assert some measure of control over his subjects, he found himself distinctly handicapped by the fact that he appointed none of their governors. An exception

was Virginia. As early as 1624, when the Virginia Company had neglected its colony shamefully and lost the lives of thousands of settlers, the king had dissolved the company and taken upon himself to appoint a governor of the colony. In Virginia the way was accordingly smooth, and toward the end of the seventeenth century the king and his Privy Council began to make the other colonies more like Virginia. Wherever possible he secured legal revocations of the early royal charters and furnished the colonies with royal governors.

Assisted by governors of his own appointing the king was able to secure pretty wide compliance with the Navigation Acts. Nevertheless, the royal governor's authority in a colony remained a matter of some uncertainty. In law the entire authority of government in every colony derived from the king, and in royal colonies it rested on the king's commission to his governor. But in law the government of England also derived from the authority of the king, and we have already noticed that in practice the king's subjects in England, or rather those who owned substantial amounts of land, exercised a growing influence on his government, through Parliament. Already at the time when the first colonies were being settled, some men had begun to apply ominous names to that influence, names like the Rights of Freeborn Englishmen. The men who came to America were familiar with the way Parliament had operated in England, and they were not slow to apply the lesson in New World circumstances, where it had different, not to say revolutionary, implications.

The Political American

In every one of the American colonies, usually within a few years of its founding, an assembly composed of the free adult men or of their representatives came into existence, with deliberate resemblances to the English Parliament. In some cases such an assembly was a matter of necessity. When the Pilgrims settled at Plymouth, they were outside the limits of the area where they were authorized to establish and govern a colony. They therefore agreed together in the famous Mayflower Compact, before going ashore, to be governed by majority rule. And as American settlers found themselves from time to time outside the limits of any government, they resorted to the same expedient, whether in Connecticut in the 1630's or in Kentucky in the 1780's. In these homemade governments an assembly would usually choose a governor but would also continue to meet regularly in order to advise the governor and to make laws limiting his actions.

Where a colony was located according to plan, with full authority vested in appropriate leaders, assemblies sprang up almost as quickly. Virginia got along without one from 1607 until 1619, but the Virginia Company discovered what the kings of England had discovered earlier, that it is easier to govern

men who have been given a hand in making the decisions of government. Indeed the New World presented so many unexpected problems to governors in every colony that they eagerly sought the advice of the settlers in such assemblies.

Where a colonial government did not feel the urge to set up an assembly itself, the settlers themselves frequently prompted the calling of one. In 1630 the government of Massachusetts was in the hands of a few individuals, members of the Massachusetts Bay Company who had crossed the ocean and brought the Company's charter with them. Voluntarily in 1631 they extended the right to vote for government officers to all church members. But by 1634, at the insistence of the settlers, the colony also had a representative assembly.

The men who sat in these early assemblies were proud of the resemblance between themselves and the English House of Commons. Though an American could not be a member of Parliament, he quickly learned to make a noise like one. The General Assembly of Virginia had been in existence for less than five years, when it passed a law (in 1623) stating that "The governor shall not lay any taxes or ympositions upon the colony, their lands or commodities other way than by the authority of the General Assembly, to be levyed and ymployed as the said Assembly shall appoint." The assembly thereby affirmed for itself at the outset the full measure of control over taxation that Parliament was winning in England.

It is not clear how membership in all the early assemblies was determined. In Maryland all the "free men" attended, but the practice began at once of one man giving his proxy to another (at one early session a single individual had enough proxies to constitute a majority all by himself), and from this developed a system of voting for representatives. In other colonies the assembly was probably representative from the beginning. But in all the colonies, sooner or later, an electorate was established with qualifications comparable to those required for voting in the English counties for members of Parliament, namely the possession of a certain amount of land. The principal business of government, in America as in England, was the regulation and protection of property. And since the principal form of property was land, in America as in England it seemed appropriate to confine the right to vote to those who owned land.

But this very imitation of Parliament necessarily produced in America a very different kind of government and a very different attitude toward government. In England the number of people qualified to vote was only a small portion of the adult male population, because few men owned land except as tenants. The House of Commons, as a result, was an assembly of very uncommon men, gentlemen all, frequently related by birth and marriage to their colleagues in the House of Lords. In America, on the other hand, the only extensive class of people who owned no land were the slaves. Slaves, of course, had no share in the government, or the representative assemblies, nor did the colonial

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governments have much to do with the government of slaves. That was left to their owners, a domestic matter which the political institutions of the colonies recognized and supported but did little to supervise. The rest of the adult male population, or much the greater part of it, owned land in quantities that easily qualified them to vote. The American representative assemblies, therefore, did not represent a ruling class, as the House of Commons did in England. An American assembly was really a house of commoners, ordinary men, sent by their neighbors to look after their affairs.

Among such people government began to mean something slightly different from what it had meant to the ordinary Englishman over the centuries. In England government was the business of a very visible ruling class, exercising authority in the name of a very present king, enforcing laws in the same manner as they collected rents, among a people who did not themselves participate either in the decisions of government or in the choice of those who did make decisions. In America government was nearly everybody's business. It might be a bore, a burden, something to avoid because of the time it took to go to the polls or to serve in the assembly or to act as selectman or sheriff or constable. But it was not the business of another class, not somebody else's business.

A government of this kind lost the aura of sanctity and awe with which the seats of the mighty had been surrounded in England. Where a man's position depended so much upon the work he did, the land he cleared, the crops he grew, the fish he caught, the ships he built and sailed, government too was apt to be judged by the work it did. American governments, watched over by representative assemblies composed mainly of hard-working farmers, became economy models, without the sinecures and pensions and multiplication of offices with which the members of Parliament rewarded themselves and their friends and relatives. The article which Benjamin Franklin applauded in the constitution of Pennsylvania, after the colonies became independent, exhibited an attitude that was already strong in America early in the colonial period:

> As every Freeman, to preserve his Independence, (if he has not a sufficient Estate) ought to have some Profession, Calling, Trade, or Farm, whereby he may honestly subsist, there can be no Necessity for, nor Use in, establishing Offices of Profit; the usual Effects of which are Dependance and Servility, unbecoming Freemen, in the Possessors and Expectants; Faction, Contention, Corruption, and Disorder among the People. Wherefore, whenever an Office, thro' Increase of Fees or otherwise, becomes so profitable, as to occasion many to apply for it, the Profits ought to be lessened by the Legislature.

It must be remembered that most Americans of the eighteenth century had never seen a king, nor yet a duke or an earl. And when the king sent royal governors to exercise authority for him, the colonists did not receive them as the bearers of some other-worldly majesty. When Governor Dudley ordered the carters off the road, they did not hurry to one side in deference to the

exalted rank that faced them. Instead, they looked over the situation and decided that it would be easier for the governor to get off the road. And when the man flew into a rage, they calmly took away his sword and broke it. What was so important, after all, about a governor?

When a royal governor confronted men like the carters, not on the road, but in a representative assembly, the encounter might be more restrained, but the results were likely to be similar. The governor might lecture the assembly on the absoluteness of his authority, on the importance of complying with the orders of their king, but the assembly, with the vast majority of the population behind them and the king three thousand miles away, could afford to look over the situation and decide that it would be better for the governor, rather than themselves, to give way. The governor, in reply, might fly into a rage, but he had no effective sword to wield against the assembly, except the threat of force to be exerted by a distant king.

The threat was not wholly empty. The colonists could see tangible evidence of British power in the army that England sent in the 1750's to subdue the French and in the Navy that patrolled the Atlantic. With the assistance of the navy, the governors did secure pretty general compliance with the Navigation Acts. The acts, as already suggested, did not seriously hamper the economic activities of the colonists. And the assemblies, of course, did not command the services of any navy of their own. The old colonial system of the eighteenth century was a workable system, and like other things that worked, the colonists respected it. It imposed burdens on them, but it also offered them advantages —it was possible for colonists as well as London merchants to win the game of empire. And without the protection of the British navy, colonial trade might have been wiped off the map by the depredations of pirates and of foreign powers.

But if the system worked, it embodied some dangers that anyone could see. During the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries Parliament had been steadily growing in power. During the same time the American colonial assemblies had been growing in the same way, using their control of the purse to exert more and more control over the actions of government. The assemblies won their powers from the king's royal governors. Parliament won its powers from the king. The assemblies had not really tried their own powers against those of Parliament. They had accepted the Navigation Acts, almost the only regulations that Parliament had imposed on them. But suppose Parliament should decide to go beyond the Navigation Acts and to extend its control over the colonies to other areas. Suppose, for example, that it should levy a tax on the colonies and thus strike at the root of the assemblies' powers.

With both the assemblies and Parliament growing in strength, it was only a matter of time until their expanding spheres of influence should come into contact. When that event took place, the assemblies would be faced with no

helpless royal governor but with the full might of England's entire government. And England would be faced, not simply with a few cantankerous representative assemblies but with the force behind those assemblies, with a new breed of man, the American.

By European standards the American did not look formidable. He could command no retinue of retainers except a body of slaves who could be expected to desert him at the first opportunity; he had no army or navy; he could attract no one to his side by the promise of pensions or places. Whatever strengths he had lay in the numbers like him. There were about 2,000,000 free Americans by 1776, and they were doubling their numbers every twenty to twenty-five years. But even in numbers the Americans did not look dangerous, because Americans in the North seemed so different from those in the South. It appeared unlikely that they would agree on anything, least of all on a common resistance to the supremacy of Parliament.

But the differences turned out to be superficial and the hidden resemblances fundamental. All these Americans looked on governmental authority, not with contempt but with a familiarity bred by long participation in it. They asked of it, as they asked of all men, not who are you but what can you do? They were not conditioned by years of deference to an aristocracy. They were not accustomed to paying rents and services to a class that God had somehow put in charge of them. They were used to being in charge both of themselves and of their government. And if a government failed to do the job they assigned it, they would not hesitate long about finding a better one.

As long as the British imperial government did its own job of protecting imperial commerce, they were content to pay for services rendered by accepting the conditions imposed under the Navigation Acts. But if the British Parliament decided to meddle in their affairs in other ways, that might be another matter. Until the end of the period covered by *The Emergence of the American*, Parliament did not meddle, and Americans scarcely knew themselves to be different from their ancestors. But in the materials here presented their descendants can perhaps recognize the men who a few years later took the sword from the hands of their royal governors and broke it beyond repair.